

## **Most Spring Wheat Quality Factors Up as Yield Drops**

GREAT FALLS, Mont. – Midway through the 2006-2007 marketing year, most quality measures for Montana's spring wheat and durum crops exceed the 15-year averages, according to test results from the Montana State Grain Laboratory.

Protein levels for the 2006 spring wheat crop are averaging 15.2 percent, compared to the historic average of 14.2 percent for 1991 to 2005, says Craig Essebaggers, State Grain Laboratory Bureau chief for the Montana Department of Agriculture. Dark Hard and Vitreous Kernels, another measure of quality, average 90.3 percent compared to the 15-year average of 77.4 percent. Dockage is 0.9 percent, compared to the historic average of 1.0 percent.

Test weights, averaging 58.7 pounds per bushel, are below the historic average of 60.1 percent. The 2006 protein levels and test weights are typical of a crop in which yields were reduced due to moisture stress, Essebaggers says.

The reverse was true for fall-planted winter wheat, which had good early season moisture that produced a crop with above-average test weights and below-average protein. Test weights for winter wheat are averaging 63 pounds per bushel, compared to the historic average of 61.2 pounds. Protein is averaging 12.3 percent, compared to the historic average of 13 percent.

Durum wheat, on average, has followed the pattern of spring-planted wheat. Test weights for the 2006 durum crop are averaging 59.9 pounds per bushel, compared to the 15-year average of 61 pounds. Durum protein has averaged 14.6 percent, compared to the historic average of 13.6 percent. Hard and Vitreous Kernels of Amber Color has averaged 90.8 percent, compared to the historic average of 85.4 percent.

The latest crop estimates from the Montana Field Office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service showed a 2006 spring wheat harvest of 63.8 million bushels, down 22 percent from 2005 due to lower yields. Growers planted fewer acres of durum and also experienced lower yields, resulting in a harvest of 6.7 million bushels, down 59 percent from last year's 16.4 million bushels.

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